Head's 69-ball ton powers Australia past England in chaotic two-day Ashes blitz

PERTH: Makeshift opener Travis Head smacked an explosive 69-ball century to power Australia to an astonishing eight-wicket victory inside two days against England on Saturday, powering his side to 205-2 late in the final session of a high-octane Ashes opener at Perth Stadium.

The manic style of cricket, which produced the shortest Ashes Test by overs-bowled to deliver a result since 1888, kept the crowd enthralled as both sides gained and relinquished the ascendancy throughout.

Head slammed a brilliant 83-ball 123 as the hosts romped home in an electric start to the five-match series. Marnus Labuschagne was not out on 51 and stand-in skipper Steve Smith on two as England meekly surrendered in the Perth cauldron.

"Wow, what a couple of days. It's been unbelievable," said Head. "The emotions are pretty high. They [England] were seriously good out there yesterday and started to drag it back, so we knew we couldn't afford to let the game slip. To be able to contribute the way I did, it feels pretty special."

England had set Australia a target of 205 after being bowled out for 164 by tea on day two, losing nine second-session wickets in the wake of a Scott Boland seam masterclass of 4-33. The tourists had made 172 in their first innings.

Head, taking the place of opener Usman Khawaja, who gingerly left the field in England's 27th over with back trouble, got Australia's run chase off to a rollicking start, giving England a taste of their own 'Bazball' medicine in the third session.

The near 50,000-strong crowd came to life when Head, who has opened nine times previously in Test cricket, quickly got into his destructive rhythm, crunching some lovely boundaries including big sixes off Brydon Carse (2-44) and Mark Wood.

He made it look easy, making a mockery of the struggles other batsmen had on the bouncy track, bringing up his half-century in 36 balls, passing 4,000 Test runs in the process.

Looking to emulate him, debutant Jake Weatherald also went on the attack, but it cost him, out for 23 after a mistimed pull shot was taken by Ben Duckett off Carse.

An unruffled Head kept the pressure on, slamming four boundaries in one Ben Stokes over and sending a six back over the head of Jofra Archer, and brought up Australia's equal-third fastest century with a risky upper-cut and a scurried single.

The fourth innings raced to a conclusion with Head clubbing four sixes and 16 boundaries before launching Carse to Ollie Pope at deep midwicket, hugging Labuschagne and soaking in the applause as he walked off.

Smith hit the winning run with a single punched to the off-side.

"Today was just incredible, wasn't it?" said Smith. "That innings from Travis Head was out of this world. He just played some outrageous shots, and even when he shanked it, he seemed to hit the gaps. It's one of those days when you're on, you're on, and he made the most of it and got us home."

England skipper Stokes agreed.

"I'm a little bit shell-shocked, I think that innings by Travis Head was pretty phenomenal," he said. "It's quite raw, quite fresh at the moment, but sheesh that was some knock. We tried 3-4 different plans there, he was going like a train. The runs were coming through quickly, he is really hard to stop when he plays like that."

England had quickly bowled Australia out for 132 to start the day, breaking the last-wicket partnership between Nathan Lyon and Brendan Doggett which added only nine to the side's overnight score.

In a relatively sedate passage of play in the lead-up to lunch, the visitors added 59 for the loss of Zak Crawley, who suffered his second first-over duck of the match at the hands of spearhead Mitchell Starc, leading the attack in the absence of stalwarts Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood; the veteran diving to his left in an incredible feat of athleticism for a memorable caught-and-bowled.

Boland, who stood up with 4-33 after going wicketless in the first innings, then ran rampant, breaking through in the second session when opener Duckett was caught for 28.

The 36-year-old claimed two more in his next over, with Pope left punching his bat in frustration after being caught behind on 33 and Harry Brook trudging off for a three-ball duck having nicked to first slip.

One of the loudest roars of the day came when Joe Root, on eight, chopped-on Starc (3-55) from well outside off-stump.

Not even the boisterous support of the "Barmy Army" could lift the tourists, as Starc celebrated his first match-haul of 10 wickets in an Ashes Test with a bouncy delivery that Stokes, on two, popped to second slip.

On a painstaking review, Jamie Smith was adjudged to have feathered debutant Doggett (3-51) to keeper Alex Carey and England's last recognised batsman walked off for 15 as the home side pressed their advantage.

Gus Atkinson and Carse put together a valuable 50-run partnership at the tail but Boland closed out the innings by having Atkinson caught in the deep for 37.

"We'll obviously let this sink in," Stokes added. "It obviously hurts extremely, but we've got to get our head around [it] and move on to Brisbane and then hit the ground running there."—Agencies

Scoreboard

ENGLAND (1st Innings) 172 (H. Brook 52, O. Pope 46; M. Starc 7-58)
AUSTRALIA (1st Innings, overnight 123-9):
J. Weatherald lbw Archer 0
M. Labuschagne b Archer 9
S. Smith c Brook b Carse 17
U. Khawaja c Smith b Carse 2
T. Head c Carse b Stokes 21
C. Green c Smith b Stokes 24
A. Carey c Carse b Stokes 26
M. Starc c Carse b Stokes 12
N. Lyon c Duckett b Carse 4
S. Boland c Brook b Stokes 0
B. Doggett not out 7
EXTRAS (LB-8, NB-2) 10
TOTAL (all out, 45.2 overs) ... 132
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-0 (Weatherald), 2-28 (Labuschagne), 3-30 (Smith), 4-31 (Khawaja), 5-76 (Head), 6-83 (Green), 7-118 (Starc), 8-121 (Carey), 9-121 (Boland)
BOWLING: Archer 9-4-11-2; Atkinson 12-5-24-0; Wood 8-1-21-0 (1nb); Carse 10.2-1-45-3 (1nb); Stokes 6-1-23-5
ENGLAND (2nd Innings):
Z. Crawley c & b Starc 0
B. Duckett c Smith b Boland 28
O. Pope c Carey b Boland 33
J. Root b Starc 8
H. Brook c Khawaja b Boland 0
B. Stokes c Smith b Starc 2
J. Smith c Carey b Doggett 15
G. Atkinson c Doggett b Boland ... 37
B. Carse c Carey b Doggett 20
J. Archer c Smith b Doggett 5
M. Wood not out 4
EXTRAS (B-1, LB-11) 12
TOTAL (all out, 34.4 overs) ... 164
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-0 (Crawley), 2-65 (Duckett), 3-76 (Pope), 4-76 (Brook), 5-76 (Root), 6-88 (Stokes), 7-104 (Smith), 8-154 (Carse), 9-160 (Archer)
BOWLING: Starc 12-1-55-3; Boland 11.4-2-33-4; Doggett 9-0-51-3; Green 2-0-13-0
AUSTRALIA (2nd Innings):
T. Head c Pope b Carse 123
J. Weatherald c Duckett b Carse ... 23
M. Labuschagne not out 51
S. Smith not out 2
EXTRAS (B-1, LB-1, W-4) 6
TOTAL (for two wkts, 28.2 overs) ... 205
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-75 (Weatherald), 2-192 (Head)
DID NOT BAT: U. Khawaja, C. Green, A. Carey, M. Starc, N. Lyon, S. Boland, B. Doggett
BOWLING: Archer 8-0-45-0; Atkinson 9-1-61-0 (3w); Carse 5.2-0-44-2 (1w); Wood 3-0-23-0; Stokes 2-0-18-0; Root 1-0-12-0
RESULT: Australia won by eight wickets.
MAN-OF-THE-MATCH: Mitchell Starc
SERIES: Australia lead five-match series 1-0.

AUSTRALIAN opener Travis Head hits a six during the first Ashes Test against England at the Perth Stadium on Saturday.—AFP

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan cuts during his explosive 80-run knock in the Twenty20 tri-nation series match against Sri Lanka at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on Saturday.—Tanveer Shahzad/White Star

Nawaz, Sahibzada star as Pakistan romp past Sri Lanka

By Kashif Abbasi

RAWALPINDI: Spinner Mohammad Nawaz set it up for Pakistan before opener Sahibzada Farhan finished it off to the joy of a packed crowd at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium.

With Nawaz (3-16) weaving his magic with the ball, including two wickets in two balls, in the Twenty20 tri-nation clash, Pakistan restricted Sri Lanka to 128-7 before romping to their target with 4.3 overs to spare in their Twenty20 tri-nation series clash on Saturday.

Sahibzada led the batting effort with his sixth T20 half-century, hitting five sixes and six fours in an explosive 80 not out off 45 balls, as Pakistan eased to a six-wicket victory that made in two in two for the hosts, who beat Zimbabwe by five wickets in the series opener.

"It was a complete game, we were very good with both bat and ball .. we started really well in all three departments and that's what we look for," Pakistan skipper Salman Ali Agha, whose side will look to seal their place in the final with victory over Zimbabwe, said.

Sri Lanka, meanwhile, have no wins in two with the defeat following a humbling at the hands on Zimbabwe on Thursday.

"We are a better team than this," rued captain Dasun Shanaka. "We feel very bad today, but looking forward to the next two games."

It had seemed all so different at the start when Shunaka won the toss and elected to bat with openers Kamil Mishara and Pathum Nissanka tearing into Pakistan's bowling with the latter cutting away Salman Mirza for four on the first ball of the innings.

Mishara then pulled Mohammad Waseem Jr, in for the injured Shaheen Shah Afridi, for six and then smashed Salman for a four and a six off consecutive deliveries in the third over.

Mishara then slashed at Faheem Ashraf and got a top-edge that ran for four but his enterprising 22 off 12 ended on the next ball when he was undone by the change of pace and found Fakhar Zaman at mid-off.

One-drop Kusal Mendis, didn't last long as he was run out in an attempt to scamper a quick two and Sri Lanka ended the powerplay at 44-2 after the incoming Kusal Perera pulled Faheem away past mid-on for four.

Spinner Abrar bowled an expensive first over, giving away 11 — four of them wides, with Perera raising Sri Lanka's 50 with his second four. But Abrar hit back in his second over, having Nissanka caught at long-off for a sluggish 23-ball 17 and Sri Lanka trudged to 65-3 by the midway point of their innings.

Perera, who made 25 off 19, welcomed Saim Ayub into the attack with a six over deep square leg but Nawaz's double-wicket burst left Sri Lanka reeling.

First Perera was cleaned up with a ball that was tossed outside off but turned enough to find a way between bat and pad and hit the off-stump before Shanaka was sent packing in similar fashion.

From 78-3, Sri Lanka slipped to 86-6 when Nawaz had Kamindu Mendis caught thanks to a superb display of athleticism by Waseem in the deep.

"All I was trying to do was to keep the lengths right," Nawaz said after the match.

A first boundary in six overs came when Janith Liyanage, who hit a valiant 41 not out, lifted Abrar straight back over his head for six on the first ball of the 17th and as Sri Lanka crossed 100, Wanindu Hasaranga got a four over extra cover two balls later.

An upper-cut for off Waseem got Liyanage his first four and he followed it up with another off Salman in the penultimate over before Hasaranga (11) holed out in the deep.

Liyanage, though, couldn't give Sri Lanka the lift they were looking for in the last over with just seven coming off it.

Pakistan got off to a flyer in the chase, Saim (20) getting the first boundary when he dispatched a full toss by Eshan Malinga and the left-hander ended the second over with two fours through the offside.

Sahibzada got on the act, lifting Hasaranga over mid-off for four and then hitting Dushmantha Chameera for a four and six — over square leg.

Saim sliced Shanaka for four to bring up his 1000 runs in T20Is but was stumped two balls later.

Sahibzada, though, was unfazed by losing his opening partner; crashing Vijayakanth Viyaskanth for four as Pakistan ended the powerplay at 53-1.

A glorious cover drive by Sahibzada off Malinga ended a 24-ball boundary drought and Pakistan were well-placed after ending the first 10 overs at 68-1.

Viyaskanth was then crashed by Sahibzada for a four and six, both in the square leg area, off consecutive balls before the right-hander raised his half-century off 33 balls.

At the other end, Babar Azam (16) got his first boundary on the 17th ball he faced when he pulled away Shanaka for six.

Sahibzada, though, was having no difficulty in getting the big hits — smoking two sixes off Hasaranga in the 13th over and following it up with another down the ground in the next off Chameera, who hit back by cleaning up Babar and trapping captain Salman lbw off consecutive balls.

But with Sahibzada at the crease, Pakistan had no jitters and the right-hander lifted Malinga for four to seal a comfortable victory for his side.

Scoreboard

SRI LANKA:
P. Nissanka c Babar b Abrar 17
K. Mishara c Fakhar b Faheem 22
K. Mendis run out 3
K. Perera b Nawaz 25
J. Liyanage not out 41
D. Shanaka b Nawaz 0
K.D. Mendis c Wasim Jr b Nawaz 3
W. Hasaranga c Farhan b Salman Mirza 11
V. Viyaskanth not out 0
EXTRAS (B-1, W-5) 6
TOTAL (for seven wickets, 20 overs) 128
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-31 (Mishara), 2-38 (K. Mendis), 3-60 (Nissanka), 4-78 (Perera), 5-78 (Shanaka), 6-86 (K.D. Mendis), 7-121 (Hasaranga)
DID NOT BAT: D. Chameera, E. Malinga
BOWLING: Salman Mirza 4-0-26-1; Wasim Jr 4-0-27-0 (1w); Faheem 2-0-15-1; Abrar 4-0-28-1 (2w); Nawaz 4-0-16-3; Saim 2-0-15-0
PAKISTAN:
Sahibzada Farhan not out 80
Saim Ayub st K. Mendis b Shanaka 20
Babar Azam b Chameera 16
Salman Ali Agha lbw Chameera 0
Usman Khan not out 5
EXTRAS (LB-4, W-6) 10
TOTAL (for three wickets, 15.3 overs) 131
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-47 (Saim), 2-116 (Babar), 3-116 (Salman)
DID NOT BAT: Fakhar Zaman, Mohammad Nawaz, Faheem Ashraf, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Salman Mirza, Abrar Ahmed
BOWLING: Chameera 3-0-29-2; Malinga 2.3-0-28-0 (2w); Hasaranga 4-0-28-0; Shanaka 2-0-14-1; Viyaskanth 4-0-28-0
RESULT: Pakistan won by seven wickets.
PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH: Mohammad Nawaz

South Africa 247-6 as Kuldeep keeps India in the fight

GUWAHATI: South Africa's top order produced a string of cameos to guide the world champions to 247 for six with spinner Kuldeep Yadav leading India's fightback on day one of the second and final Test in Guwahati on Saturday.

Aiden Markram and Ryan Rickleton combined in an opening stand of 82 to give the tourists the start they were looking for after skipper Temba Bavuma won the toss and elected to bat.

Bavuma and Tristan Stubbs then raised 84 runs for the third wicket even though both missed the fifty mark.

India managed to keep a check on the run rate but Senuran Muthusamy (25) and Kyle Verreynne (one) will return on Sunday with South Africa eyeing a 300-plus total.

"A bit disappointing in the end there," Stubbs told the official broadcasters. "I think all of us in the top six got in and no ones really made that big one. "It [the pitch] wasn't free-flowing. You felt comfortable, but the scoreboard wasn't going anywhere."

Due to the early sunrise and fast-fading light in northeast India, the normal refreshment order has been flipped for the match, scheduling the tea break ahead of lunch in the first-ever Test at Barsapara Cricket Stadium.

Having won the series opener inside three days on a spinning track in Kolkata, Bavuma elected to bat on a pitch that had a fair amount of grass coverage and no cracks from where the ball could kick up.

Markram (38) got a reprieve on four when Jasprit Bumrah drew an edge but KL Rahul floored the catch at slip.

India's stand-in captain Rishabh Pant, leading the side in the absence of injured skipper Shubman Gill, introduced spin in the 14th over but Washington Sundar was unable to make an immediate impact.

Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep joined Sundar from the other end but the openers would still not be separated.

Pant then brought back Bumrah for one final over before the tea break and the decision paid off, Markram's thick inside edge sending the ball crashing into his stumps.

Rickelton (35) could not press on after the tea break and fell caught behind to Kuldeep (3-48).

Bavuma (41) was compact in his defence, while Stubbs (49) used his feet well against the Indian spinners.

South Africa were cruising at 166-2 before India struck back with their spinners to halt the tourists' progress in the final session.

Ravindra Jadeja broke through with his left-arm spin to dismiss in-form Bavuma, who scored the only fifty in the opener in Kolkata, after the batter chipped to mid-off.

Stubbs attempted to keep up the tempo as he hit Jadeja for a six but soon Kuldeep had him caught at slip and then sent back Wiaan Mulder (13) even as South Africa became the first team to breach the 200-mark in the two-Test series.

Armed with the second new ball, Mohammed Siraj cut short Tony de Zorzi's knock of 28 in fading light.

India's assistant coach Ryan ten Doeschate said it was an "even day".

"I think it was just good old-fashioned attritional Test cricket," Ten Doeschate told reporters. "And I thought both sides accounted for themselves very well. I thought we stuck at it brilliantly. Just when the game was slipping away, a couple of times we managed to get a foothold back into the game."

South Africa, who recently drew 1-1 in Pakistan, are chasing a first series win in India since Hansie Cronje's team triumphed there in 2000.—Agencies

Scoreboard

SOUTH AFRICA (1st Innings):
A. Markram b Bumrah 38
R. Rickelton c Pant b Yadav 35
T. Stubbs c Rahul b Yadav 49
T. Bavuma c Jaiswal b Jadeja 41
T. de Zorzi c Pant b Siraj 28
W. Mulder c Jaiswal b Yadav 13
S. Muthusamy not out 25
K. Verreynne not out 1
EXTRAS (B-8, LB-7, NB-2) 17
TOTAL (for six wickets, 81.5 overs) 247
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-82 (Markram), 2-82 (Rickelton), 3-166 (Bavuma), 4-187 (Stubbs), 5-201 (Mulder), 6-246 (de Zorzi)
STILL TO BAT: M. Jansen, S. Harmer, K. Maharaj
BOWLING: Bumrah 17-6-38-1 (1nb); Siraj 17.5-3-59-1; Reddy 4-0-21-0; Sundar 14-3-36-0; Yadav 17-3-48-3; Jadeja 12-1-30-1 (1nb)
INDIA: Y. Jaiswal, KL Rahul, S. Sudharsan, W. Sundar, R. Pant, R. Jadeja, D. Jurel, N. Reddy, K. Yadav, M. Siraj, J. Bumrah

New Zealand sweep West Indies ODI series with convincing win

HAMILTON: Matt Henry took 4-43 and Mark Chapman crafted 64 as New Zealand coasted to a four-wicket win over the West Indies in the third One-day International on Saturday for a series sweep.

The tourists' top order failed to fire once again, skittled for 161 in Hamilton before New Zealand eased to 162-6 off 30.2 overs.

The chase started poorly, with the home side reduced to 32-3, before Chapman's steady knock was supplemented by an unbeaten 40 from Michael Bracewell.

The most one-sided match of the series left New Zealand savouring a 3-0 triumph, following their 3-1 win in the T20 series.

The teams will next contest three Tests, starting in Christchurch on December 2.

Henry, expected to be a key figure in the Test series, hoped they could continue their winning momentum into the longer format.

"It's an exciting little stretch of cricket coming up," he said. "We've been playing some really good cricket and we've been winning some of the key moments, which has got us over the line. Everyone's stepping up in different ways, which is great."

The West Indies won the toss but their specialist batsmen struggled to establish themselves, a problem evident throughout both white-ball series.

Captain Shai Hope scored a century in game two but he lamented the inability of their top order to build big scores across the series.

He said it was unacceptable for their innings to last just 36.2 overs at Seddon Park.

"Again, we're just not clicking with the bat unfortunately," he said. "We haven't assessed the conditions and adapted as quickly as we should, that was a big issue in this game in particular. We just didn't get in. We didn't get that flow, that momentum."

WEST INDIES captain Shai Hope reacts after his dismissal during the third One-day International against New Zealand at Seddon Park on Saturday.—AFP

Henry rocked the visitors early with two wickets in the space of three balls in his third over, removing opener Ackeem Auguste for 17 and Keacy Carty without scoring.

Wickets fell regularly from that point, including that of Hope, caught down the leg side for 16 off the bowling of Zak Foulkes.

With his team teetering at 95-7, Roston Chase led a low-order rearguard with 38 before falling to Henry.

Top order trio Devon Conway, Rachin Ravindra and Will Young all departed early for New Zealand but Chapman combined with Bracewell for 75 runs for the fifth wicket to make the outcome safe.

Chapman swatted 19 runs off Matthew Forde in the 27th over to lift the 31-year-old past 50 for a seventh time. His 63-ball knock featured eight fours and two sixes.—AFP

Scoreboard

WEST INDIES:
J. Campbell c Bracewell b Jamieson ... 26
A. Auguste c Ravindra b Henry ... 17
K. Carty b Henry 0
S. Hope c Latham b Foulkes 16
S. Rutherford c Chapman b Duffy ... 19
R. Chase c Bracewell b Henry ... 38
J. Greaves c & b Santner 1
M. Forde lbw b Santner 0
S. Springer c Latham b Duffy 12
K. Pierre not out 22
J. Seales c Santner b Henry 0
EXTRAS (LB-6, W-4) 10
TOTAL (all out, 36.2 overs) 161
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-31 (Auguste), 2-31 (Carty), 3-55 (Campbell), 4-77 (Hope), 5-91 (Rutherford), 6-95 (Greaves), 7-95 (Forde), 8-124 (Springer), 9-143 (Chase)
BOWLING: Henry 9.2-0-43-4; Jamieson 9-1-44-1; Foulkes 4-0-13-1 (3w); Duffy 7-0-27-2 (1w); Santner 6-0-27-2; Bracewell 1-0-1-0
NEW ZEALAND:
D. Conway c Carty b Seales 11
R. Ravindra b Forde 14
W. Young c Pierre b Forde 3
M. Chapman c Pierre b Seales ... 64
T. Latham c Forde b Chase 10
M. Bracewell not out 40
M. Santner c Chase b Springer 9
Z. Foulkes not out 2
EXTRAS (LB-2, W-7) 9
TOTAL (for six wkts, 30.3 overs) 162
DID NOT BAT: K. Jamieson, M. Henry, J. Duffy
FALL OF WICKETS: 1-25 (Conway), 2-27 (Ravindra), 3-32 (Young), 4-70 (Latham), 5-145 (Chapman), 6-156 (Santner)
BOWLING: Forde 9-1-46-2 (2w); Seales 8-1-35-2 (1w); Springer 4-0-16-1 (2w); Greaves 5-0-33-0 (2w); Chase 4.3-0-30-1
RESULT: New Zealand won by four wickets.
PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH: Matt Henry
SERIES: New Zealand won three-match series 3-0.
PLAYER-OF-THE-SERIES: Kyle Jamieson